



HERO-WITHIN

"Creating Connections That Inspire Resilience"

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Impact Report

What is HERO-WITHIN?

HERO-WITHIN is an "award and special opportunity grant" program designed to honor and inspire youth at-risk who are becoming remarkably resilient. Specialists in partnering schools and agencies nominate youth who are working hard to change their self-view; gaining control over their emotions and behavior; and improving school performance. During an award celebration, the youth receive a certificate, gift card and a funded special-interest opportunity. Combining both elements (award and special opportunity grant) makes HWI effective. These provide powerful affirmation and reinforcement to their change.

Three Dimensional Impact

1. **Partnering entities** gain an additional service to help graduation rate without obligation or cost
2. **Partnering-specialists** gain a new resource to reward and motivate their students without added paperwork or cost plus appreciation for their hard work
3. **HWI Youth (and supports)** gain recognition and special opportunities of their choice without cost

Award Information

Award presentations generally occur at schools in conference rooms, gymnasiums, auditoriums or cafeterias. Sometimes video conferencing is used to include extended family and special friends. It is a tangible and joyous experience.

- The certificate provides a visual reminder of accomplishment and tends to last awhile
- The gift card provides money and freedom of choice that is very empowering to teens

How You Can Help

- ✓ **Superhero Sponsor \$2,000 and above** - Helps us grow and enhance HWI programing across the state
- ✓ **Champion Sponsor \$1,000** - Funds HWI program services and opportunity grants to 2 youth per year
- ✓ **Hero Sponsor \$500** - Funds HWI program services and opportunity grant to 1 youth per year
- ✓ **Nominate a HWI** - Nominate a youth or help us identify someone in your community to contact
- ✓ **Identify Partner Orgs** - Help identify partner orgs to offer special-interest opportunity



Resilience (ACES Study)

Resilience is the ability to face and overcome adversity, then thrive. Resilient youth are more likely to complete their education and become hopeful and productive adults. However, non-resilient youth are easily overwhelmed and prone to school drop-out, homelessness, mental illness, poverty and incarceration with enormous societal and economic cost.



Special-interest opportunities are funded by CBR YouthConnect donors

Resilience is reinforced by offering recipients the opportunity to explore and develop their interests and hidden talents. Opportunities include anything young minds can imagine such as camps, clubs, teams, courses, lessons, memberships, shadowing, equipment, instruments, events, and more. CBR YouthConnect works with specialists, parents/guardians to coordinate and fund the arrangements.



About CBR YouthConnect

CBR YouthConnect is the operating entity of Colorado Boys Ranch Foundation. It is privately funded; focuses on YOUTH DEVELOPMENT thru partnerships; and has served over 17,000 youth at all levels-of-care in Colorado and nationally. As part of its 65th Anniversary, it launched a "Resilience Initiative".



Who is eligible to receive the award?

The award is available to any youth aged 11-19 who is overcoming adversity and showing resilience.



Partnerships

Partners are schools and entities doing the challenging work of educating and supporting fragile youth with multiple traumas and adversities.

- Jeffco Public Schools
- Littleton Public Schools
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
- Partners For Prosperity
- Whiz Kids
- Colorado Youth Outdoors

Common Adversities

- Unsafe conditions
- Actual harm and danger
- Lack of support
- Significant loss
- Family disruption
- Disabilities and illness
- Poverty
- Social isolation
- Sudden, unpredictable change

Before Having Resilience

- Poor school attendance
- Cautious and mistrusting in relationships
- Isolated without friends
- Impulsive and easily distracted
- Aggressive and unsafe behavior
- Emotionally volatile
- Quiet and withdrawn
- Negative attitude and choices
- Negative reaction to change

NOTE: Most youth have been involved in multiple public support systems i.e., child welfare, mental health, juvenile and domestic courts, medical specialists

After Having Resilience Skills

- Stays positive
- Attends school
- Asks for help
- Expresses thoughts and feelings
- Moral compass
- Driven to succeed
- Multiple interests
- Trusting relationships
- Adapts to changing conditions

NOTE: These resilience skills are the result of hours, days, months and years of support from specially trained professional teams and key family members.

Feedback from Youth and Family

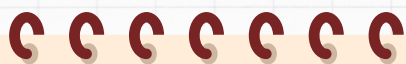
- "This is the first time Sarah's been recognized for how much she's grown. It will be awesome."
- "This support provides students with the opportunity to pursue a passion, develop pro-social skills, and gain experience."
- "Can't tell you how great this will be for Edwin. He's worked so hard and deserves needs some recognition and praise"
- "It was so nice to have an outside person recognize this wonderful young person."
- "Eric is so ready for this award! It's amazing how far he's come in life this last year."

SOME ARE RESILIENTLY "THRIVING"

Resilience is the ability to face and overcome adversity, then thrive.

- Continually bouncing back from adversity
- Working toward dreams for the future
- Trying new things
- Working and paying taxes
- Getting good grades
- Being a leader
- Taking on responsibilities
- Enjoying a positive group of "best friends"
- Living by a positive personal moral code

Your support can change lives.



Your generosity provides opportunities for these brave and resilient young people to take healthy risks, explore new possibilities and become confident and capable young adults.

Donate Today!

Superhero Sponsor
\$2,000+

Champion Sponsor
\$1,000

Hero Sponsor
\$500

Nominate a HWI Youth

Identify Partner Orgs



Music Instrument - "I've wanted to do this (be in a school band) for a long time. It's actually coming through."

Flight Lessons - "Learning to fly a plane is going to be awesome. Some day I'll be a real pilot."

Vocational Equipment - "I loved trade school. Now I can get some of my own tools and maybe get a summer job helping out my uncle."

Youth About Their Special Interest Opportunity

Bicycle - "Finally, I can go with my friends and ride around the park and everything like the rest of my friends."

HS Summer Basketball Team - "I thought I couldn't be on the team because it cost too much. Now I can and the coach is happy and so is the team. Yeah, it's going to be good"

Martial Arts - I've always wanted to learn karate and be strong and safe. And have the Karate clothes, too. I can't wait. My friend is going to join, too."



Resilience Narrative

In our midst, exists a group of young people whose lives are shaped by adversity. Each face unique challenges, from familial struggles, cultural biases, and physical limitations to personal insecurities, or even basic survival needs. Yet, amidst their trials, they embody resilience beyond measure. Resilience: that almost miraculous quality in some people to adapt successfully to whatever changes, challenges or hardships that come their way. Know the heroes we celebrate and support.

SPECIAL NOTE: This report is about real lives and real stories of resilient youth. As such, stories are protected for privacy and confidentiality. Unless permitted by parent or guardian, names in this report are pseudonyms.

Profiles of Hero-Within Recipients

1

25 youth,
ages 9-19,
14 boys, 11 girls

In specialized
school programs

General

2

7 -- homelessness
13 -- food insecurity
5 -- medically-physically impaired
18 -- out-of-home placement
17 -- abuse/neglect/abandonment
16 -- housing insufficiency
13 -- school drop-out or no attendance
22 -- multiple types of trauma

Life
Experiences

3

All recipients have experienced trauma that deeply distressed and disturbed their development. Their group profile:

- **Acute Trauma** (single events - 100%)
- **Complex Trauma** (prolonged and repeated events - 80%)
- **Vicarious Trauma** (witnesses someone else's trauma - 70%)
- **Generational Trauma** (passed down - 60%).

Trauma

4

1. **20%** have lived in safe, supportive and connected family situations yet faced extraordinary adversity related to significant physical-neurological disabilities, tragic loss, major injury and other trauma.
2. **40%** have lived intermittently at home, with family members or in homelessness due to sudden and periodic fluctuations in their safety, support and well-being.
3. **70%** are now living in foster care, or with relatives due to unsafe, unstable, unsupportive and disconnected family conditions.

Life
Scenarios



James, 15 y/o

There is 15 year-old "James" whose family came to the United States from Mexico seeking a better life and a good education for their boy. Shy and uncertain, and son to a single dad, he struggled to find his place among his new peers. His heart longed for friends who would understand him, but fear held him back from reaching out. It was his basketball coach who saw the strength within James and encouraged him to become a team leader. Over time, James stepped up and worked hard to earn a spot on the team. It was this team who encircled him when his extended family showed up to surprise him with the HWI award that would provide funds for him to participate in basketball camp with his friends this summer.

Alex, 18 y/o

Then there is 18-year-old "Alex" whose parents disowned them when Alex began to question their identity. Without their support, Alex felt abandoned and unimportant.

Their dreams seemed distant, overshadowed by the weight of meeting even their most basic needs. That's when Alex's mentor nominated them for a HWI award.

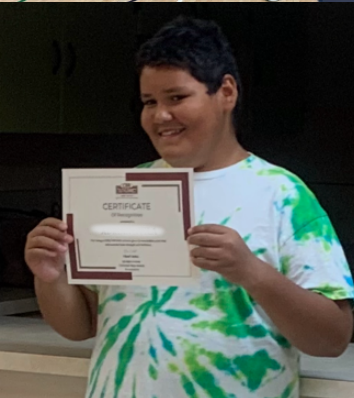
"Due to the award, I had the opportunity to explore a new state, but also learn many fascinating things that have helped me now and will aid me in the future," says Alex.

"The experiences and knowledge gained from this trip are one-in-a-million and would not have been possible without your generous support." Alex used their award funds to attend the National High School Journalism Convention and graduated from high school a few weeks ago. They are enrolled to attend college this fall.

Elijah, 13 y/o

13-year-old "Elijah" who has navigated an unstable home and family environment with unwavering bravery. While transition became routine, he refused to let those changes define him. Always fascinated by flight and aero technology, Elijah began studying airplanes a few years ago. His mentor discovered this passion and helped facilitate a connection with a flight instructor. Thanks to an HWI award, Elijah will be taking flight lessons this summer and hopes to have his pilot's license when he graduates from high school. Your support is propelling him toward a brighter future.

Fueled by the encouragement of their mentors and friends, these youth group can chase their dreams with renewed vigor. Despite the obstacles they face, the HWI foundation has provided a steppingstone toward their greatness. These are the heroes in our midst. And as they look toward the horizon, they have hope.



ALAN is a curious and quiet 9th grade youth with significant learning disabilities who lives with a safe and caring family but in a very dangerous neighborhood. So much so, he can't go outside or walk alone to school. He helps care for his younger brother with autism; is teacher's helper at school; and helps tutor elementary kids in low-level math. He loves music. Joining the school band is his social life. Alan was nominated by a community youth organization who has observed his life and development over the past few years. As a surprise, Alan was presented the HWI award at a gathering in front of youth he has helped tutor. For his special interest opportunity, he chose a clarinet.

WARREN is an active 13 year old in 8th grade. He endured years of multiple traumas, loss and disruption plus other adversities during most of his childhood. At 7 years old, he entered foster care for his own safety. Since then, he has lived in 6 additional foster homes. This led to low self-confidence, struggles with social and emotional control and guarded trust in others. Even though the effects of trauma and these adversities are still part of his life, Warren is growing and developing resilience. Those who know and work with him are amazed at his talents and tenacity to succeed. They talk about how he continues to grow and make progress in nearly all areas of his life. He is displaying personal confidence; communicating his thoughts and feelings and making good decisions. He is not only attending school regularly, he is helping his teacher, making good choices and trying lots of new things. His next major life challenge/opportunity is an upcoming adoption and a move out-of-state. He was presented the HWI award at his school with grandparents, adoptive parent and school staff at his side. Warren is still deciding on his special interest opportunity.

*Names have been changed for privacy.

ABLE is in 11th grade and daily overcomes learning deficits. Academics are difficult yet he learns quickly when he's doing something with his hands. He lives in a dangerous community and has been bullied and threatened much of his life. Despite the odds, ABLE has built the resilience to attend vocational school and plans to be a tradesman. He was nominated by a community youth organization and presented the HWI award at the vocational school. He selected vocational tools for his special-interest opportunity.

HOLLY is in 10th grade and living in foster care. In her lifetime, she's experienced multiple traumas involving poverty, insufficient housing, significant loss and family disruption due to abusiveness, neglect and social isolation. She has worked hard to overcome these adversities. What is exciting is that Holly has learned to accept support, regulate her emotions and ask for help when needed. She is able to regulate emotions and receive compliments. She no longer avoids school and attends regularly. She is now known for respecting authority and making good choices. All of these are huge indicators of resilience. She was presented the HWI award by surprise at her school, surrounded by foster parents, teachers and friends. For her special interest opportunity, she selected a summer program involving self-defense and personal strength training.

KILEY is a freshman at a Choice School in LPS. Even though trauma and adversities have and continue to be part of her life, she is showing the skills of resilience. What is exciting is that she is accepting support and seeing herself more positively. She attends school, shows respect for authority and has built a reputation for being reliable. All of these are gains in resilience. Kiley received the HWI award in a surprise presentation at school with family and friends. She is still deciding on her special interest opportunity but is considering something related to photography.